CHURCH NEWS

FROM THE NORTHERN COUNTRIES

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Edited by
THE NORTHERN ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE
Sigtuna, Sweden

Director: Dr. HARRY JOHANSSON, Sigtuna, Sweden
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No. 74 September 29th, 1961.

Greater Efforts Desired by Northern Christian Temperance Movements.

A joint conference in Oslo of the Christian Temperance Movements in the Northern countries has issued an appeal to the churches in the Northern countries for increased efforts in the temperance cause. The leaders of the churches are requested to deal with the temperance movement as part of the social responsibilities of a Christian and to include it in the work of the individual congregations and among young people and children.

In his address, the President of the Christian World Temperance Union, Dr. Hans Schaffner, Basel, said that the present consumption of alcohol in Asia and Africa has risen to ten times the amount 12 years ago, and that at least 10 % of private incomes in the two continents are spent on alcohol. In a communication to the missionary councils and missionary societies in the Northern countries, the temperance movements promise to help find suitable material for making a contribution in the younger churches.

"Deacons" for the Developing Countries.

The Northern Diakonia Council, a co-ordinating organ for male diakonia work in the Northern countries, which met at Stora Sköndal, Sweden, has discussed how "deacons" may be employed to the best advantage in developing countries. It was resolved to ask the Lutheran World Federation for suggestions for a suitable training of "deacons" for such service.

The Council, which meets annually, is contemplating the publication of a common Northern diakonia journal. The 1,450 "deacons" in the Northern countries will be invited to attend a conference at the Young People's School "Solborg", near Stavanger, Norway.

Northern Evangelical Conference on Education.

At Haslev Folk High School, Denmark, a Northern conference for leaders on "The Teaching of Christianity in Modern Times" will be held from October 6th - 8th next. The conference will be attended by representatives of Evangelical educational organs and institutions in the Northern countries. The Danish Evangelical Pedagogical Union, consisting of representatives of a number of religious organs interested in educational matters, has invited to the conference.

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DENMARK

Sharp Criticism of Government Committee on Help to Developing Countries.

In the periodical of the Danish Mission to the Santals "The Santal Post", Professor Hal Koch, D.D., has sharply criticized a report submitted by the Government Committee on problems in connection with developing countries, reproaching Government for not having included experts from the Danish Foreign Mission societies in the Committee. The Professor particularly mentions the Danish Missionary Society, which has been coping with such problems for nearly 150 years. The Secretary General of the Society, Rev. Erik W. Nielsen, former Secretary for a number of years of the International Missionary Council, has more experience and expert knowledge than all the members of the Committee put together, the Professor writes. "Whether it is out of ill-will or of simple ignorance that he has been left out, I do not know, but it is downright disgraceful and has proved a costly ommission", the article, which has caused considerable attention, says.

The Professor ridicules the suspiciousness of Foreign Missions apparently prevailing among "modern and well-informed men". They are children of our modern scientific, vaguely positivistic, and rather sceptical attitude to life, to whom the highest expression of faith amounts to leaving everyone alone to be saved in his own fashion, having not the slightest inkling of the fact that their "conception of life" is, more than anything else, a strange imported article in the overseas countries.

In conclusion the Professor draws the attention of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, under whom the help to developing countries belongs, to the fact that it will be nothing short of a scandal if a couple of representatives of Foreign Missions and, in any circumstances, Mr. Erik W. Nielsen, are not included in the Committee.

Several Danish newspapers have supported Professor Hal Koch's demand that Foreign Mission experts be consulted when planning the help to developing countries.

Natural Science Not in Contradiction to Faith in God.

In his welcoming address to the new undergraduates at the Technical University of Denmark, Copenhagen, at the beginning of September, the Rector Professor E. Knuth-Winterfeld, dealt with, among other things, the relation between Christianity and science and said:

"It seems to be the general idea that the findings of science knock the bottom out of the inner coherence in Christianity. For some, this is a convenient idea, because it makes it impossible to fix the responsibility for life at anything definite; for others, it becomes a personal tragedy. I should like, therefore, to say as my personal conviction that the nature and methods of science are not able to throw light on issues that are of a fundamentally religious aspect. In modern natural science there is nothing to contradict a person who believes in God."

DENMARK

Many Critics of Government Doubtful on Help to Developing Countries

In the periodical of the Danish Director to the Danish Page ental Zoet", Professor Ove Nyborg, D.D., has strongly criticized a re- port submitted by the Government Commission on Problems in connection with developing countries, proposing Government for not having in- cluded experts from the Danish Foreign Mission societies in the Com- mittee. The Professor is particularly doubtful the Danish Missionary Society, which has been working with good progress for nearly 150 years. The Secretary General of the Society, Rev. Erik W. Nielsen, former Secretary for a number of years of the Ecumenical Directory Council, has more experience and expert knowledge than all the members of the Committee put together, the observer writes. Whether it is out of ill-will or of simple ignorance must be due left out, I do not know, but it is downright disgraceful and has proved a costly omission", the article, which has caused considerable attention, says.

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"It ought to be the general idea that the ideology of science knock the bottom out of the inner coherence in Christianity. For people, this is a convenient idea, because it makes it impossible to become a personal Christian. I myself like it, as my personal conviction that the nature and method of science are not able to throw light on issues that are of a fundamentally religious respect. In modern natural science there is nothing to contradict the person who believes in God."

Yet Another Woman Pastor.

Another prominent woman theologian in Denmark will now take orders. The 49-years old Head of the Congregational High School "Marthabo", Miss Inger Malmstrøm, has been appointed Assistant Curate of the Risbjerg Church in the Diocese of Elsinore. For a number of years, Miss Malmstrøm was a missionary in the Mission to the Santals, became a deaconess in 1952, and since 1953, has been Head of "Marthabo" which is now to be closed down.

FINLAND

Presidential Candidate on Importance of the Church.

According to the "Församlingsbladet", one of the candidates at the approaching Finnish Presidential election, the former Attorney General, Mr. Olavi Honka, whose candidature is supported by six Democratic Parties, at a number of election meetings has dealt with the importance of the Church to society.

In an election address, Mr. Honka stressed the enormous importance of the deeply religious attitude to life that has taken root in the Finnish nation. We must not underestimate the value of religious and moral conceptions - quite on the contrary, we should regard them as the very foundation of our social order, he said.

At another meeting, Mr. Olavi Honka emphasized the happy fact that the Finnish people is united in the matter of spiritual fundamental values: In certain respects, though, an ethical weakening may be noted, owing to the prevailing materialism in our time. Mr. Honka pointed out the danger of taking the spiritual and moral values so much for granted that one neglects to practice them in everyday life. If our nation should take that road, its spiritual backbone will be broken and everything will go to pieces, he said.

First Roman-Catholic Ordination in Finland Since the Reformation.

On the first Sunday in September a remarkable event took place in Finland. For the first time since the Middle Ages, a Finnish citizen was ordained in the Roman Catholic Church. Father Martti Vuotilainen, M.A., Dominican Friar, was ordained by the Roman-Catholic Bishop in Finland, Bishop G.P.B. Cobben. Father Vuotilainen has been educated in France and will continue his studies there for another two years before probably beginning service in Finland.

Two other Finnish citizens have been Roman-Catholic priests in Finland in this century, but they were both of them ordained abroad.

400 Persons Attend Orthodox Kirchentag.

From August 25th - 27th the Orthodox Church in Finland for the first time invited to an Orthodox Kirchentag at Kuopio, the See of the Archbishop, under the main heading "The Church in Modern Times". The Kirchentag was attended by no less than 400 people. The opening address was delivered by Archbishop Paavali on the topic of the motto, and other topics for consideration were "The Importance of the Homes in the Congregation of To-day" (including the problem of mixed marriages), "The Importance of the School to the Education of the Church",

Another Young Pastor.

Another prominent woman theologian in Finland will now take order. The 49-years old head of the Georgia Final High School "Martinho", Miss Inger Melartin, has been appointed Assistant Curate of the Ristijärvi Church in the Diocese of Tavastland. For a number of years, Miss Melartin was a missionary in the Diocese of Tavastland, became a deaconess in 1932, and since 1939, has been head of "Martinho" which is now to be closed down.

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Two other Finnish citizens have been Roman-Catholic priests in Finland in this century, but they were both of them living abroad.

400 Persons Attend Ordination Ceremonies.

From August 25th - 27th the Orthodox Church in Finland for the first time invited to an Ordinator Ministering at Uusipo, the Bp. of Arnhiebop, under the title "The Church in Modern Life".
The Ordinator was attended by no less than 400 people. The opening address was delivered by Archbishop Germanos on the topic of the work and other topics for one-hour-each were "The Importance of the Home in the Congregation of To-day (including the problem of mixed marriages)", "The Importance of the School to the Church".

and "The Officers of the Congregation, Their Duties and Their Relation to the Church". The Archbishop closed the Kirchentag with a lecture on "The Voice of the Fathers and the Church in Our Time".

Lively Religious Intercourse Finland-East Germany.

There has been a lively intercourse recently between East German and Finnish clergymen's families. Groups of Finnish clergymen have paid visits to the historical Luther-towns in East Germany where they were heartily welcomed. Many East German clergymen and their families have likewise been to Finland on their holidays.

Strong Religious Influence on Finnish Radio and Television.

The programmes of the Finnish radio are rather strongly influenced by the Church. There are morning devotions every day in the week, evening prayers three times a week, and church services every Sunday. To this comes sacred music and various programmes on present-day church matters and on the history of the Church. Bible quizzes are also quite frequent.

At the moment there is a series on the gospel and current problems of life, called "In the Family Circle", going on in the State Television. In November a series on the great world religions will be started. Finally, there are church services and devotions specially adapted to the television.

Rev. Ahti Auranen to Negotiate in America.

Rev. Ahti Auranen, Rural Dean, of the Ecclesiastical Board, has left for America in order to attend the conference of the Lutheran World Federation in Toronto, and to negotiate with representatives of the Lutheran Churches in the U.S.A. and Canada about the pastoral care among the emigrants from Finland. The Dean also plans to study examples of modern American church architecture in various parts of America.

NORWAY

Two New Bishops in Norway.

The King and the Government of Norway have appointed two new bishops. Rev. Per Juvkam, 51, curate and president of the Norwegian Clergymen's Association, became Bishop of Bjørgvin (Bergen), and Rev. Monrad Norderval, 59, Bishop of Nord-Hålogaland, the most northern diocese of Norway. Bishop Norderval is known as "the minister of the Polar Sea" because of his work among the fishermen at Greenland.

Youth Conference Wants More Local Ecumenicity.

In a resolution, the International Youth Conference in Oslo in August advocates increased efforts to make the idea of local ecumenicity more actively felt than has been the case so far. Attention is also drawn to the growing general appreciation of the help to developing countries and the responsibility of the Christians in this matter.

The conference, which lasted for five days, was attended by 70 people from all five continents, and the discussions were centred around the main topic of "The Tasks of Christian Youth in Our Time". The conference was arranged by the Norwegian Institute for Ecumenical Contact in co-operation with the Evangelical Academy at Loccum, Germany.

Earlier Confirmation or Communion for Children.

In an article in the "Kirkebladet", the Head of the Institute for Christian Education in Norway, Mr. Bjarne Hareide, has raised the question of whether confirmation in the Lutheran National Church ought not to take place earlier than at the age of 14 - 15 years, as at present.

Mr. Hareide feels that the tendency to prefer confirmation at a late age is due to the pietistic tradition for confirmation. Before the pietistic period, confirmation took place around the age of 12, and there are strong theological, psychological, and pedagogical arguments in favour of this age.

In this connection Mr. Hareide maintains that an early solution to the problem of children's communion is urgent. Is it right to deprive young people of the grace accorded through Holy Communion and to let them enter upon the critical years of puberty without this source of strength, he asks, and continues: "The Church must either find an order for communion for children, or seriously consider the question of lowering the age for confirmation".

Free Schools Made Impossible in Norway?

If the proposal for a revision of the law about higher education, advanced by the Committee set up by the Norwegian Government Department for Church and Education, is carried, it will make the running of free, private institutions for higher education impossible, the religious daily paper in Oslo "Vårt Land" maintains. According to the paper, the proposal stipulates, among other things, that all private schools receiving ordinary Government grants (amounting to less than 50 o/o of the total expenses) must not charge the students anything, and that leaders as well as instructors at such institutions must be appointed by the Department. The ban on school fees in State subsidized private schools would entail, for instance, that the Christian Secondary School in Oslo, at present attended by 500 students, would have to raise 600,000 Norwegian Crowns annually from private sources for the running of the school, an undertaking, which, the paper feels, would be quite hopeless. And the stipulation that leaders and teachers should be appointed by the State would be tantamount to robbing the schools of their independence.

The proposal of the Committee will now be submitted for expert consideration before the drawing up of the final Bill to be introduced in the "Stortinget" (Parliament), and the paper expects heated debates on the matter inside as well as outside of Parliament.

Warning against "the Approaching World Church".

At the World Methodist Conference in August in Oslo, the past President, Dr. Harold Roberts, said that "the approaching world church" will take over the spiritual inheritance of the various churches becoming members of it. Until then, the Methodist and the other churches must find their place in the great fellowship of mutual service.

In an editorial, the Christian daily paper in Oslo "Vårt Land" objects to this statement. The paper takes it to mean that Dr. Roberts is in favour of the vision of a universal church, a super church so to speak, and the fact that it is a prominent person like Dr. Roberts who makes the statement, gives it importance.

The paper is of the opinion that Christian unity is of a spiritual nature, bestowed in and together with a true faith in Christ. The goal must be to co-operate in the search for this unity, whereas it is of relative less importance how this unity is to be practically and organizationally expressed. The danger of the quest for truth being reduced to a matter of relative importance in connection with such an "approaching world church" is emphasized as is also the fact that the concentration of power represented by such a universal church would hardly be consistent with the true nature of the Church of Christ. The paper concludes by advocating keeping the ecumenical endeavours at the council level and leaving off all dreams of a super church.

Big Film on Norwegian Revivalist Preacher.

In the near future a film on the great Norwegian revivalist preacher, Hans Nielsen Hauge will be shown for the first time. Rev. Hans Nielsen Hauge lived from 1771-1824 and, owing to the official opposition to his preaching, spent ten years of his life in prison. The film manuscript was written by the former Director of "Norsk Film", Mr. Colbjørn Helander. The film is the most costly so far produced in Norway, the expenditure amounting to 1 million Norwegian Crowns. There are 70 actors and actesses and 700 extras in the film.

SWEDEN

The Churches Commemorate Dag Hammarskjöld.

The decease of Mr. Dag Hammarskjöld has made the deepest impression upon the whole Swedish people, and the Churches have arranged mournful solemnities.

At the request of the Bishops of the Lutheran National Church the parish ministers at the ordinary or special church services have reminded their congregations of the death of Mr. Hammarskjöld and its serious message to mankind. A special prayer for peace was read, and it shall be read at every service as long as the acute menace to peace remains. In the evening of the funeral day short peace services were held in the local churches.

In the Cathedral of Uppsala, where the funeral service had taken place, the peace service was lead by the Archbishop of Uppsala.

The funeral service was conducted by the emeritus Archbishop of Uppsala Dr. Erling Eidem, D.D., assisted by the present Archbishop of Uppsala Dr. Gunnar Hultgren and the Dean of the Cathedral of Uppsala Dr. Olle Herrlin. Archbishop Eidem is a former president of the World Council of Churches, and Archbishop Hultgren is a member of the Central and the Executive Committees of the World Council.

A great number of appeals have been made to the Swedish public to give contributions to funds in memory of Mr. Dag Hammarskjöld. The Lutheran National Church of Sweden plans to build a youth training centre in Africa.

Bishops' Pastoral Letter Must Have Consequences.

Commenting on the pastoral letter on marriage and divorce, issued by the Swedish Bishops and reprinted in the last number of CN, the "Svensk Kyrkotidning" expresses its regret that the letter does not more clearly state the Christian view on marriage as a divine in-

titution or gives more specific suggestions for expounding this view. he paper, nevertheless, would like the pastoral letter to become widely known, and, in six points, draws up the practical consequences which he letter ought to have:

1. Intensified propagation for the Christian view on marriage through preaching, lecturing, preparation of candidates for confirmation, and literature.
2. Consultation and brief information prior to the wedding.
3. Study groups on marriage problems and courses on marriage.
4. Assistance in Christian education in the homes.
5. Congregational sponsorship in connection with baptism, so that representatives of the congregation pay regular visits to the homes of children christened in the church.
6. Establishment of church family consultation centres and introduction of proper training which would qualify people to be family consultants.

Suggestion for Ecumenical Spiritual Care in Prisons.

A committee set up by the Swedish National Prisons Board has proposed a new arrangement on an ecumenical basis of the spiritual care of long term prisoners. According to the proposal, there should be a Spiritual Board at each prison, consisting of the Prison Director, a clergyman from the Lutheran National Church, and a minister from a Free Church. There should, moreover, be three travelling secretaries, viz. a prison missionary from the Salvation Army, a clergyman from the Lutheran National Church and a clergyman appointed by the Free Church Joint Committee, all three to be paid by the State.

The Committee suggests that the spiritual care should also include the present 16,000 people who are either bound over or released on probation.

Free Church Rally Celebrates Sewing Club Centenary.

The annual Free Church rally at the "Skansen" in Stockholm which, by tradition, is held on the first Sunday in September, was attended by not quite so many people as last year. At the rally there were devotional services, revivalist meetings, youth activities, lectures, and concerts. A special event was the celebration of the centenary of the establishment of the Free Church sewing clubs. For one hundred years women in such Free Church sewing clubs have collected very large sums of money in support of Foreign Missions and other religious undertakings. The special programme showed a sewing club of 1861 and a similar one of to-day and concluded in pointing out that the contributions of such sewing clubs are still much needed.

Free Church Travelling Exhibition to be Shown in 100 Places.

On the initiative of the Swedish Free Church Joint Committee, representing eight different denominations as well as the Salvation Army and the Evangelical National Missionary Society a Free Church travelling exhibition is being prepared which from January 1962 will be shown in 100 places all over the country. It will give objective information about the ideas and importance to society of the Free Churches. A small study leaflet for use in schools and a pamphlet, giving all the facts about the exhibits, are also being prepared in connection with the exhibition.

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